



Making the most of your first year

INMO student and new graduate officer, **Liam Conway**, gives incoming students some tips for surviving their first year as nursing and midwifery students

WELCOME to the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation. As a new student in nursing or midwifery, you are now joining the trade union that represents nurses and midwives exclusively with over 40,000 members nationwide.

As your officer, I am here to help you and your classmates in any way I can. I am always available to provide support, advice and information or deal with any issues or concerns you may have. If you have an issue or concern when training, always contact the INMO as we provide free advice and representation to our members.

As your trade union we provide a wide range of services and members benefit from the following:

- Free indemnity cover and legal advice
- Free INMO representation on an individual and group basis
- INMO rewards scheme (www.inmo.ie/Rewards_Scheme)
- Access to further education and free courses – www.inmoprofessional.ie (dependent on course and availability)
- Discounted car, home and travel insurance with our partners Cornmarket Insurance
- Monthly *Student Link* (online magazine for student news and updates)
- Student focus (educational piece for students) available on our website
- Dedicated student and new graduate tab on our website
- National campaigns to improve nursing and midwifery conditions in Ireland.

For your one-stop shop for all student needs visit www.inmo.ie/Student_New_Graduates

Tips for starting college

College may be a completely new experience for you. I remember how daunting it was walking into a packed room of over 150 other students. I came from Tipperary to study in UCD, Dublin.

My advice is this, sit beside someone you



INMO Student Section and Youth Forum members pictured (l-r): Antoinette Ryan, third-year general nursing student, GMIT and PR officer, INMO student section; Fidelma Kenny, general nursing graduate, NUIG and Western Youth Forum; Lynn Muldowney, general nursing graduate, NUIG and Western Youth Forum; Clarence Soliman, Dublin Youth Forum and INMO SVUH Branch; John Nolan, ID nursing graduate and chairperson of the INMO Student Section; Catherine O'Connor, chairperson of the INMO Dublin Youth Forum; and Liam Conway, INMO student and new graduate officer

don't know every day. A simple line in the middle of a lecture like "do you understand that?" or "I didn't catch what the lecturer said, what did they say?" is the perfect ice-breaker.

Take as many notes as you can in lectures. Trust me, when it comes to exams these are a lifesaver. Your attendance is crucial in succeeding too. You will be surprised how much information you retain by taking a few notes, even if you have been socialising the night before.

Try to have a good filing system for each module. Put your lecture slides in a folder on your laptop labelled for each module and similarly have a folder for hard copy notes. Back these up on a harddrive or USB, especially assignments as laptops and computers can be unpredictable.

A diary is essential. You will need to keep a record of module lectures, what time they are on and where they are on and even sometimes what building they are in. Having a diary is also important for noting assignment due dates and exams. It focuses the mind on the tasks ahead.

If you do a little bit every night, then you don't have to climb Mount Everest the night before an assignment is due. If you attempt to do assignments last minute

your grades will suffer, even if you meet a deadline.

Use the library to get as much information as needed for an assignment. The week before an assignment is due, there won't be a nursing book to be found in the library so the best advice I can give is to get in as soon as the assignment title is given and start collecting the information you need. Even if you don't start the assignment for another two weeks, you will have the material to work with.

Socialising

Socialising is important. Join as many societies and clubs as you can. I took up Lua Gar kickboxing in first year. Try something different, college is all about gaining new experiences and if you get the balance right between study and social life you are on to a winner.

Another piece of advice that is very important is to always be safe and careful on social media. As a student of nursing and midwifery, you are now a professional in training. Posting content about you, your colleagues or your profession can have serious consequences. Always ask yourself 'Does that paint a good picture of me as a nursing or midwifery student'? If it doesn't, don't post it, like it or share it.

Dear first-year self,

The first day of first year is exciting, nerve wracking and empowering all at the same time. You're in, you've succeeded – but you feel a bit apprehensive. You are about to embark on the most up and down, but best, year of your life. Keep the head down as much as you can. Join the INMO as your backbone, take notes, go to the lectures but definitely make time for that drink before home or an over priced lunch – they are just as important. When you do your placement module you will be that new girl/guy but work hard, ask to be involved, put the effort in because your reputation is very quickly gained and a reputation as an eager, pleasant, hard-working and courteous student will stand to you big time. Do not leave everything to the last minute – there is no worse feeling than leaving an exam with a heavy heart because you think you failed and having to plan your summer holidays around repeat dates. Keep the head down but most of all enjoy it. Nursing is a brilliant course no matter what discipline.

– **Niamh Donohoe, 2nd year ID nursing, TCD**

There are so many support services available in college. Link with your peers, lecturers and personal tutors if you have any academic queries. Your lecturers and tutors will always go out of their way to assist you if needed. There is also a student chaplaincy service on campus, your students union if you have issues around health services, accommodation, financial supports etc, and, of course, you have us.

The INMO is here to support you and provide you with any information needed. You should contact us if you have issues in clinical placement or if you are asked to attend a meeting that you're not sure about. If you just want to find out more about anything, you can always contact me. There is no such thing as a silly question.

I will contact you via email once a month with an update and I will also send the *Student Link*. You can also keep up-to-date on our social media platforms and of course on the INMO student/graduate section on the INMO website.

I look forward to meeting you all throughout your training.

Liam Conway is INMO student and new graduate officer
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From my perspective as a (very) mature student, there are a few things I think are important which have served me well over the last three years. Like most mature students of a certain vintage, I'm sure you will all have other commitments like family and work. Finding the right balance will be crucial over the next four years. Firstly, don't leave assignments and portfolios to the last minute. I know this is an old cliché but trust me this is a key piece of advice. This will ease the pressure and make college life a bit easier and free up time for your other commitments. Utilise all services available in the college for example, academic writing tutorials. I used this service and my assignments marks improved by over 20%. There are other services which will also make college life easier, just do some research and find what is available in your particular college. If, like myself, you are returning to education for the first time in a very long time I'm sure you are going to have some reservations. On this note I would like to put your mind at ease, yes your class will be full of younger people and yes it might feel a bit daunting at the beginning but your life experience and knowledge will become a valuable asset to the class. Enjoy all aspects of college life, it's a fantastic experience, and trust me the next four years will pass you by in a flash. – **Clyde Corentin, 4th-year psychiatric nursing student**

Preceptors are often so busy that you may be occasionally left by the wayside. In these cases, the best way to become involved is to ask "what can I do to help?" and take the initiative of asking the nurses to take you with them if they're going to do something you think you'd benefit from seeing. They have so many students from the whole four-year programme that they may forget which skills you may not have seen/attained yet. While your first time on the ward can seem daunting, rest assured that it all comes with experience. Remember, if the year before you were able to get through it, then so can you. Good luck!

– **Catherine O Connor, RGN**

Four years may seem like a long way away right now but trust me it flies! You will make friends and memories for life as well as gain invaluable knowledge and life skills. I would advise incoming first-years not to underestimate the importance of just sitting and talking to patients on placement. Nursing can be so embedded in routine and some people are miles from home in a place they have never been before and just need someone to listen and talk to. I would also encourage first-years to get involved as much as possible in college activities, clubs and societies, the INMO Student Section and on clinical placements. Don't be afraid to follow your nurse and ask 101 questions too!

– **Rebecca Moylan, 4th year general student, NUIG**

A way to learn medications that can be beneficial is to carry a small address book in your pocket while on the wards. Write the generic name of the drugs in alphabetical order in the book and then in brackets write the brand name. In two to three lines you can then write the indications, main side-effects, contraindications and any special precautions.

– **Dublin Youth Forum**

Remember that college is not just about engaging in your studies – take every opportunity that is given to you and perhaps join a club or society to meet like-minded people. Become acquainted with your tutor as soon as possible because he/she can give you advice on any topic, whether it be a personal or academic issue. Don't ever be afraid to ask questions and remember there's no such thing as a silly question! – **Megan Skelly, 4th-year intern, NUIG**

Congratulations on being accepted to your degree. Try your best to study hard and never forget why you wanted to become a nurse or midwife as the courses are not easy. Even as a student you will have a big impact on your patients' lives so always put yourself in their shoes and give them the best care you can. The academic semesters can be heavy but remember that you bring everything you learn in college into the clinical environment. The Student Section of the INMO is great for networking with other students around the country.

– **Breffni Monahan, 3rd year, UCD**